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DARTH MAUL

Book I, Part III

Jedi Padawan Eldra Kaitis is the prisoner of profiteering gangster Xev Xrexus. Xrexus has gathered the most dangerous crime bosses in the galaxy to participate in a nefarious auction to purchase the Padawan.

Little does Xrexus know, Sith apprentice Darth Maul has infiltrated the auction. With a group of bounty hunters – including Cad Bane and Aurra Sing – Maul plans on purchasing or kidnapping the Padawan. Maul plans on kidnapping the Padawan, and then killing her, in order to satiate his desire for vengeance against the Jedi.

But Maul's Master – the mysterious Darth Sidious – has forbidden Maul from interacting with the Jedi. Maul operates in secrecy, knowing that he will face severe punishment if Sidious discovers his disobedience....

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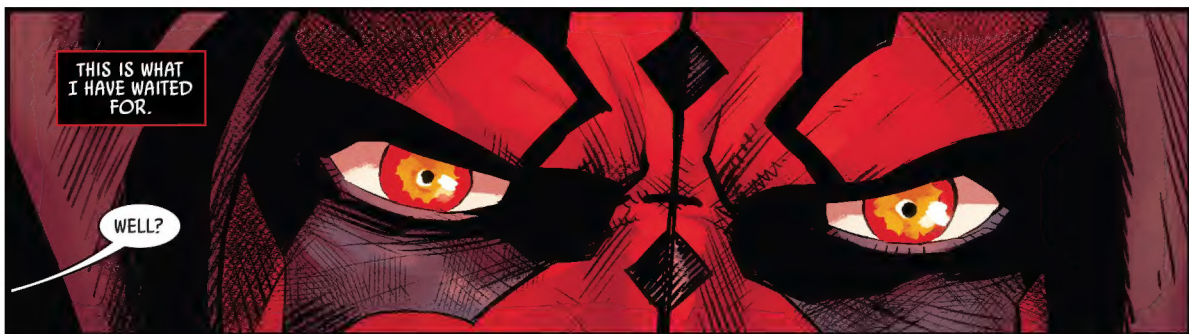
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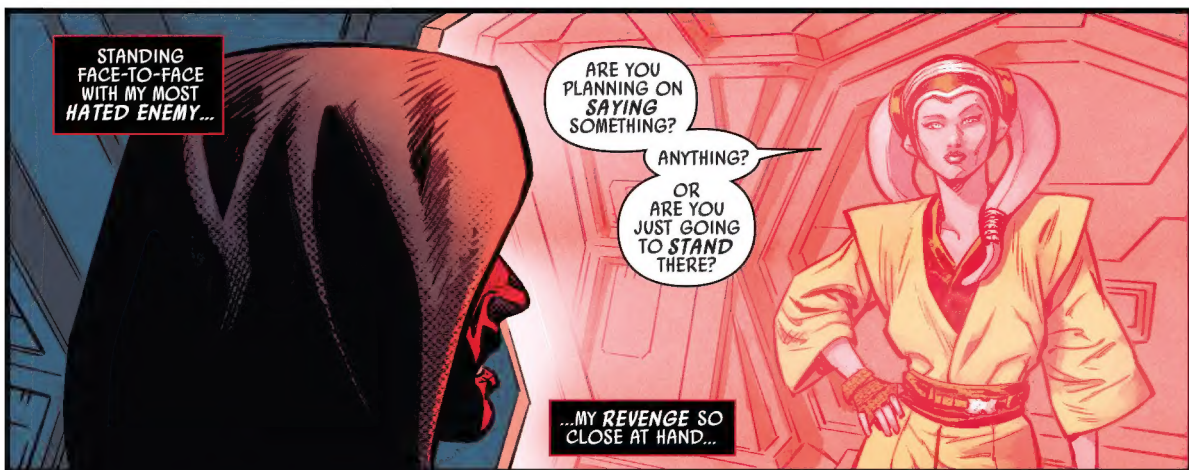
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THIS IS WHAT
I HAVE WAITED
FOR.

WELL?



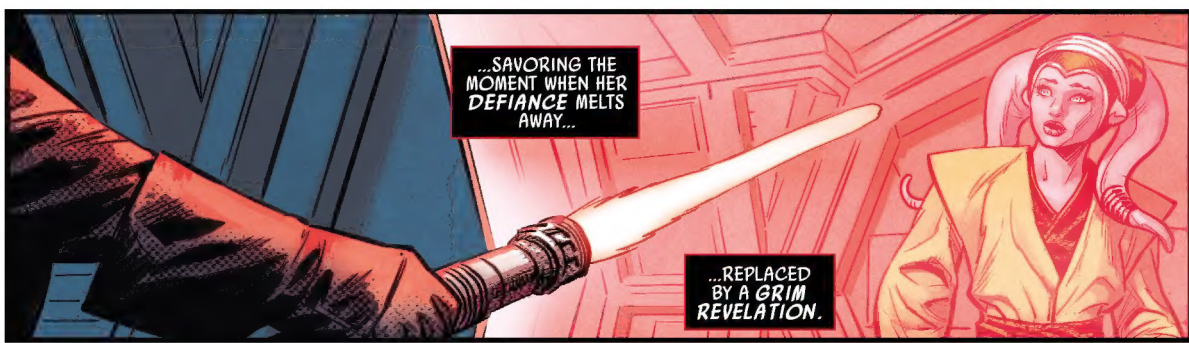
STANDING
FACE-TO-FACE
WITH MY MOST
HATED ENEMY...

ARE YOU
PLANNING ON
SAYING
SOMETHING?

ANYTHING?

OR
ARE YOU
JUST GOING
TO *STAND*
THERE?

...MY REVENGE SO
CLOSE AT HAND...



...SAVORING THE
MOMENT WHEN HER
DEFIANCE SELTS
AWAY...

...REPLACED
BY A GRIM
REVELATION.



SHE DOESN'T FULLY
UNDERSTAND WHO IT IS THAT
STANDS BEFORE HER...

WHO...
...WHAT
ARE YOU?

...BUT COLD FEAR UNCOILS
WITHIN HER. SHE UNDERSTANDS
ON A PRIMAL LEVEL--



--THE
SITH HAVE
RETURNED.



SWON
JENPAPA



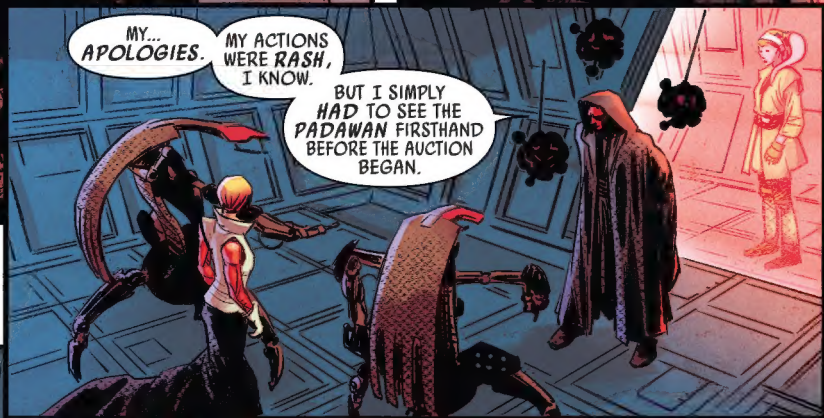
TUT-TUT. OH,
TUT-TUT.

I'M AFRAID
THIS IS AN
EGREGIOUS
VIOLATION OF
PROTOCOL.



YOU'RE
NOT ALLOWED
HERE.

THIS AREA
IS STRICTLY
OFF-LIMITS,
BUT I'M SURE
YOU KNEW
THAT.



MY...
APOLOGIES.

MY ACTIONS
WERE RASH,
I KNOW.

BUT I SIMPLY
HAD TO SEE THE
PADAWAN FIRSTHAND
BEFORE THE AUCTION
BEGAN.



RASH,
INDEED.

MY OTHER
GUESTS WOULD BE
OH-SO-DISAPPOINTED
IF THEY KNEW THAT ONE
OF THE OTHER BIDDERS
WERE AFFORDED SOME
PRIVILEGE THEY
WERE NOT.

AND I
DON'T THINK
ANYONE WOULD WANT
TO DISAPPOINT
CLIENTELE OF THIS
CALIBER.

IT'S SIMPLY
BAD FOR
BUSINESS.





WHO ARE YOU?

MY NAME IS...SERIS MADRETH.

I REPRESENT THE HADDREX CONSORTIUM.



"CONSORTIUM"? DEAR BOY, LET'S CALL YOUR EMPLOYERS WHAT THEY ARE.

A GANG, YES?

AND I'M ASSUMING THEY WOULD BE *NONE* TOO PLEASED WITH ONE OF THEIR REPRESENTATIVES RUNNING OFF ON WHAT LOOKS LIKE MUST BE AN *UNAUTHORIZED* EXCURSION.

IT WOULD BE...FOR THE *BEST* IF THIS COULD BE KEPT BETWEEN US.



I SEE NO REASON WE SHOULDN'T AVOID ANY *UNPLEASANTNESS*. AFTER ALL, I APPRECIATE A LITTLE *RASHNESS* EVERY NOW AND THEN.

JUST MAKE SURE IT DOESN'T HAPPEN AGAIN, YES? I WOULD *SO* HATE TO VAPORIZE YOU.

BUT MY *FORGIVING* NATURE HAS ITS LIMITS.



PATIENCE,
THEN.

ALWAYS
PATIENCE.

MY MASTER...IF HE
KNEW ABOUT MY
PLANS...WOULD LIKELY
FIND THIS AMUSING.



I'VE RUN THE
CALCULATIONS,
AND I'M AFRAID
YOU WILL NOT BE
PLEASED WITH
THE RESULTS.

KEEP
TALKING,
DROID.

BASED ON
THE FUNDS
WE HAVE
ON BOARD...

...AND COMPARED TO
APPROXIMATIONS
OF THE FUNDS THE
OTHER BIDDERS WILL
HAVE AVAILABLE...



...THE PROBABILITY
OF OUR PLACING
THE WINNING BID
IS BARELY WORTH
MENTIONING.





MY FORMER MASTERS HAD NO INTENTION OF PURCHASING THE JEDI PADAWAN.

THEY HOPED TO RAID THE AUCTION...TAKE THE PADAWAN...AND ROB THE OTHER GUESTS WHILE THEY WERE AT IT.

THAT'S MESSY BUSINESS. NOT THAT THIS ISN'T MESSY ENOUGH AS IT STANDS.



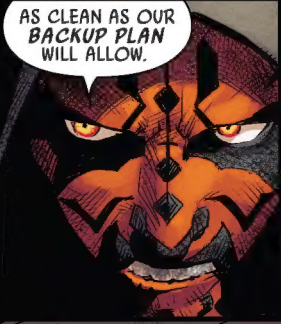
THE HADDREX GANG NEVER SHIED AWAY FROM A SCRAP. THEY WERE STUPID... BUT FUN.

THAT'S NOT OUR SORT OF GAMBIT, THOUGH, IS IT, BOSS?

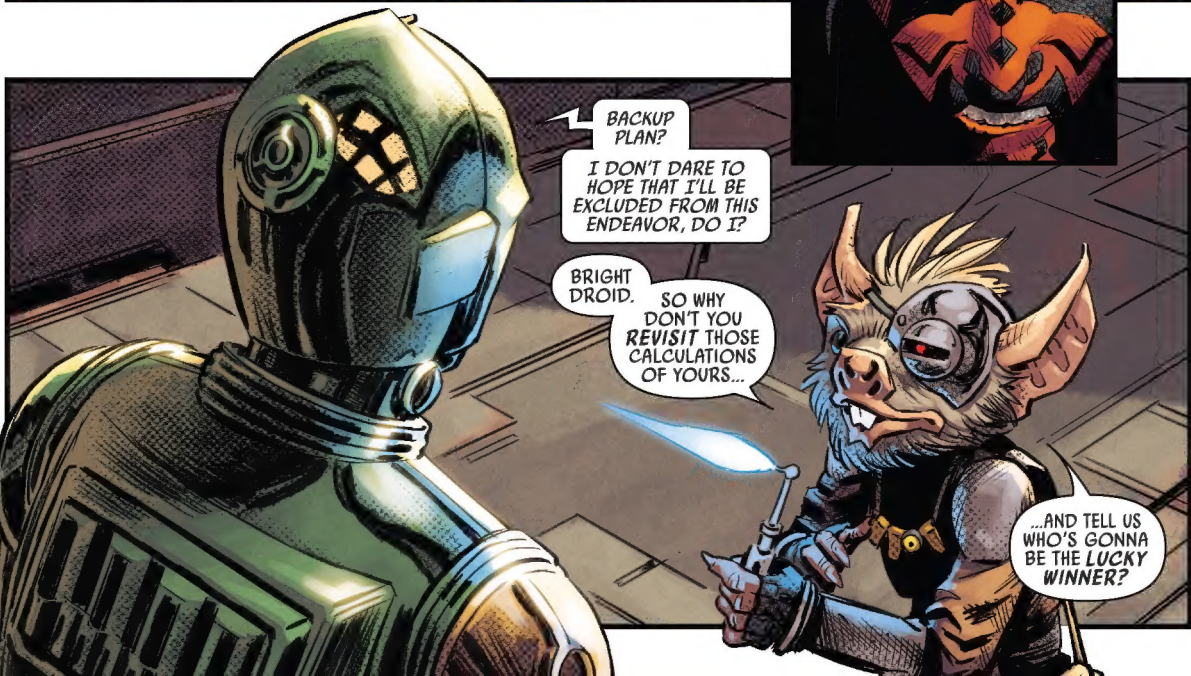
WE COULD TRY TO KIDNAP THE GIRL IN A BLAZE OF BLASTER FIRE... OR RAZE THIS SPACE STATION AND EVERYONE ON IT...

...BUT THAT LEAVES TOO MANY VARIABLES...

...AND YOU WANT TO GET AWAY CLEAN.



AS CLEAN AS OUR BACKUP PLAN WILL ALLOW.



BACKUP PLAN? I DON'T DARE TO HOPE THAT I'LL BE EXCLUDED FROM THIS ENDEAVOR, DO I?

BRIGHT DROID. SO WHY DON'T YOU REVISIT THOSE CALCULATIONS OF YOURS...

...AND TELL US WHO'S GONNA BE THE LUCKY WINNER?



ANXIOUSNESS...
ANGER...HATRED...

...FLOWING
THROUGH ME...

...STRONG ENOUGH
THAT THOSE AROUND
ME--EVEN THOSE WHO
DO NOT KNOW THE
FORCE...



...MUST
FEEL IT...

...A UNSEEN,
BURGEONING
MENACE SWELLING
ALL AROUND THEM.



FOR SOMEONE LIKE
ELDRA KAITIS, THE
FEELING MUST BE
OVERWHELMING.

I IMAGINE HER,
SITTING IN HER CELL,
NEARLY DROWNING
IN HER OWN DREAD.



DESPITE MY PLANS, I WANT
TO UNLEASH MY FURY, TO
SLAUGHTER EVERYONE ON
THIS STATION AS I CUT MY
WAY TOWARD MY PREY.

DARTH
SIDIOUS
TRAINED ME
TO ACT.



IN DENYING ME
MY NATURE, HE
BETRAYS ME.

AND SO I BETRAY
HIM--MY DREADED
MASTER--BY BEING
HERE AT ALL.



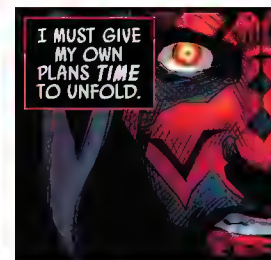
IF I AM CAUGHT,
THOUGH, MY
PUNISHMENT WILL
BE SEVERE.

WELCOME,
HONORED
GUESTS.

I THINK
YOU'VE ALL
WAITED LONG
ENOUGH.

UP FOR
AUCTION IS ONE
JEDI PADAWAN, FOR
YOU TO RANSOM, MAIM,
OR MUTILATE IN
WHATEVER WAY
YOU DESIRE.

IF HE WERE TO KILL ME,
I WOULD BE DENIED MY
RIGHT--MY CHANCE TO
KILL THE HATED JEDI.



I MUST GIVE
MY OWN
PLANS TIME
TO UNFOLD.

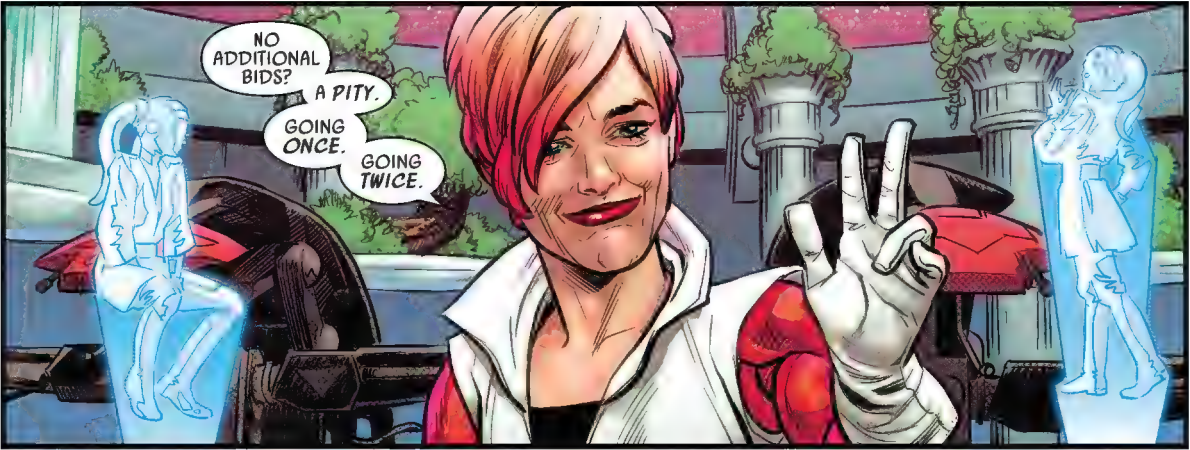


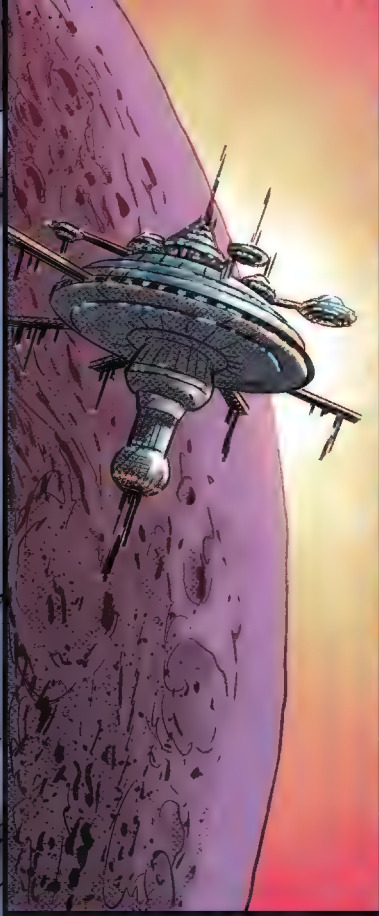
LET'S START
THE BIDDING AT
500,000 UNMARKED
CREDITS,
SHALL WE?

IN THIS WAY, I AM
MORE LIKE MY MASTER
THAN I REALIZED.









THE SHIP HAS BEEN PREPPED, YES?

YES, JEE KRA.

EXCELLENT.

I WANT TO LEAVE AT ONCE.

XEV MIGHT BE THROWING A PARTY TO CONSOLE THE LOSING BIDDERS...



...BUT I HAVE MY PRIZE.
BOTH MY PRIZES.

CAREFUL WITH THAT LIGHTSABER.

I'D HATE TO SEE YOU BURN YOUR OWN FACE OFF WITH IT.



YOU HAVE PLUCK! I LIKE THAT!

YOU SHOULD BE GLAD ONE OF THE OTHERS DIDN'T WIN THE AUCTION.

I SHUDDER TO THINK WHAT THEY MIGHT HAVE DONE WITH A PADAWAN.



MAKE NO MISTAKE, THOUGH...

...I HAVE MEANS OF TEARING SPIRIT AND RESOLVE AWAY FROM MY PRISONERS...

...AND I'M SURE--

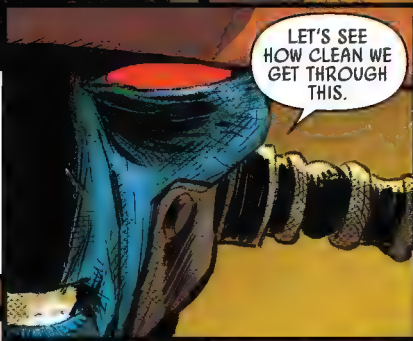


WHAT?
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?



IS IT POSSIBLE
THAT YOU ACTUALLY
THOUGHT YOU MIGHT
GET AWAY WITH
THIS?

DID YOU
TRULY BELIEVE YOU
COULD JUST PURCHASE
A JEDI PADAWAN AND
WALK AWAY WITHOUT
REPERCUSSIONS?



LET'S SEE
HOW CLEAN WE
GET THROUGH
THIS.



DID YOU
THINK I WOULD
ALLOW SUCH A
TRANSGRESSION?



WHO ARE
YOU?
AM I
SUPPOSED TO
KNOW--

THE
DOOR!
THEY'RE
SEALING
US IN!







THE
ROBE!
IT'S
CONSTRICTING!
SMOTHERING
HIM!

LEAVE
HIM!
HE'S
GONE!



THE
SAME GOES
FOR ALL OF
YOU.
MAYBE
FOR ALL OF
US, TOO.



I KNOW
WHO HE
IS...
...WHAT
HE IS...





YOU...
YOU ARE--



YOU KNOW
NOTHING!
NOTHING
ABOUT WHO
I AM!
NOTHING
ABOUT WHAT
I WANT!



I KNOW I'M
NOT AFRAID
OF YOU.

I KNOW YOU'RE
TRYING TO HIDE WHO
YOU REALLY ARE FROM
THE SCUM YOU'RE
WORKING WITH.

EVEN WHILE
YOU WERE FIGHTING
JUST NOW.

DESPITE ALL
THE JUMPING AND
KICKING, WHAT YOU
REALLY WANTED TO
USE WAS--



WE'RE
LEAVING.

GET US
INTO SPACE
BEFORE WHAT WE'VE
DONE HERE IS
DISCOVERED.

WHATEVER
YOU SAY...
BOSS.



GET YOUR
HANDS OFF
ME, YOU--



AS YOU
WISH.

UNF!

YOU...
YOU'RE A
SITH, AREN'T
YOU?

I'VE HEARD
RUMORS...SINCE I
WAS A YOUNGLING...
BUT I DIDN'T THINK
YOU WERE
REAL.



OF
COURSE
NOT.

YOU **PRAYED**
YOU WOULD NEVER
STAND BEFORE
YOUR NIGHTMARES
MADE **FLESH**.

YOU THINK
YOU **SCARE**
ME?

YOU'RE THE
ONE WHO IS
LURKING IN THE
SHADOWS...KEEPING
WHO YOU REALLY
ARE A **SECRET**.

YOU'RE
THE ONE WHO'S
SCARED.





FAR
ABOVE, FAR
BELOW.

WE DON'T
KNOW WHERE
WE'LL FALL.

FAR
ABOVE, FAR
BELOW.

WHAT ONCE
WAS GREAT
IS RENDERED
SMALL.



NO OFFENSE,
BUT I DON'T HAVE
TIME FOR *NURSERY*
RHYMES.

IF YOU'RE
GOING TO KILL
ME, GET ON
WITH IT.

BETTER
YET--

--TAKE THESE
BINDERS OFF ME
AND HAND ME MY
LIGHTSABER.

WE'LL SEE
HOW ALL THAT
SPINNING AND
LEAPING HELPS YOU
AGAINST AN
EQUAL--



YOU
ARE *NOT* MY
EQUAL!

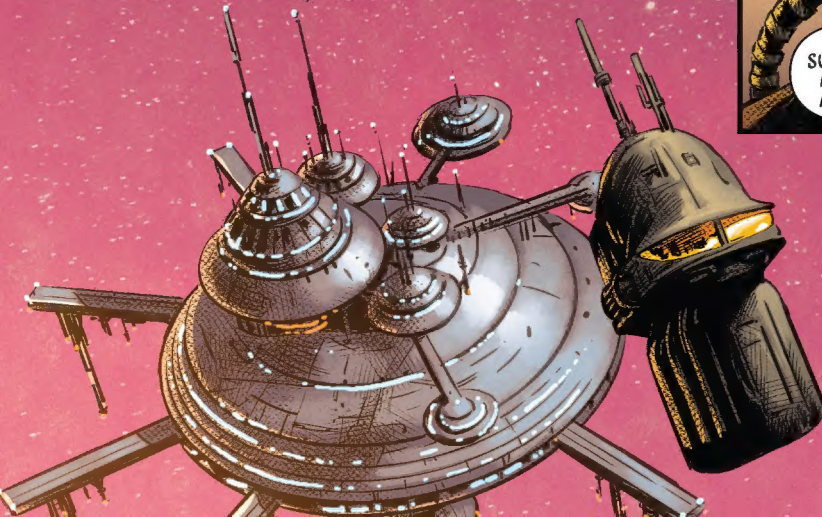
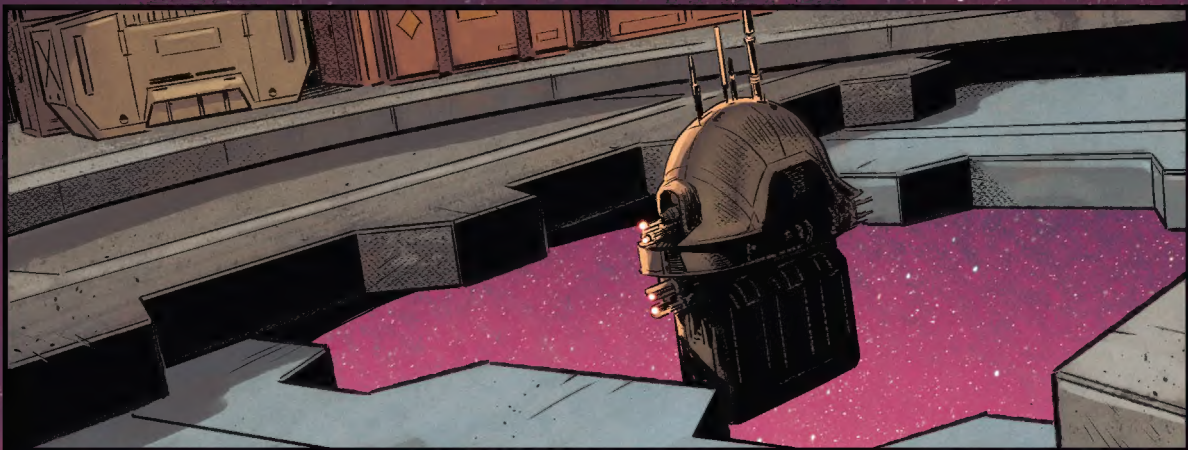
NO JEDI CAN
MATCH MY SKILL,
MY FURY, MY
RIGHTEOUSNESS!

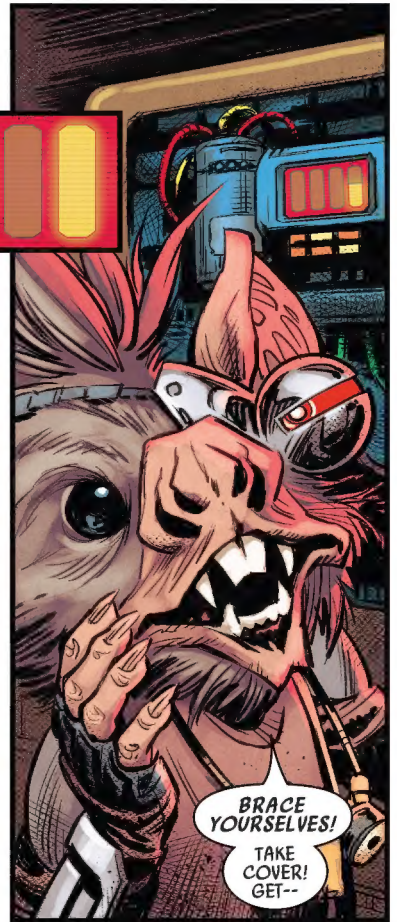
AND--
TRUST ME, MY
DEAR--I WILL
CUT YOU
FREE.

I WILL
HAND YOU THIS
LIGHTSABER.



AND
THEN I WILL
HAVE MY
REVENGE.







DARTH MAUL

NEXT ISSUE:

